

C L A I M S

The following is a detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application. A status identifier is provided for every claim and the current text of every claim is presented, unless the claim has been cancelled. Current amendments to the claims are expressed in the detailed listing by strikethrough or double-brackets (for deleted matter) or underlining (for added matter).

1 – 49 (Cancelled)

50. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

generating an outcome represented by a plurality of symbols;

counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol, thereby determining a number of occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol counted in accordance with an expiration condition; and

determining whether the number is at least a minimum number; and

providing, if the number is at least a minimum number, a bonus payout based on a the number of occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol-counted-in accordance-with-an-expiration-condition,

wherein the expiration condition defines at least one of

(i) a number of plays, from a play in which an occurrence occurs, after which the occurrence expires and

(ii) a period of time, from a time at which an occurrence occurs, after which the occurrence expires, and further

wherein the expiration condition is associated with each respective occurrence, such that a first occurrence may expire at a first time and a second occurrence may expire at a second time that is different from the first time.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol includes incrementing a count value by an integer value.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein the expiration condition includes a number of plays after which an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires, and

wherein the method further includes determining an expiration of an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol based on the expiration condition.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein the expiration condition includes a time after which an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires, and

wherein the method further includes determining an expiration of an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol based on the expiration condition.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol is performed only if a payout amount for the outcome is less than a predefined amount.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51 further including storing the count value on a player tracking card, and wherein the count value includes status data related to an expiration criterion of each occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51 further including storing the count value at a slot server, and wherein the count value includes status data related to an expiration criterion of each occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein determining a bonus payout further includes determining the bonus payout based on a number of plays of a slot machine.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein determining a bonus payout further includes determining the bonus payout based on a duration of time.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51 wherein the count value represents occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol generated by a second slot machine.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 further including receiving a wager, and

wherein determining a bonus payout further includes determining the bonus payout based on the wager.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51 wherein the at least one tracked symbol includes at least one bonus symbol which contributes to the count value and at least one offsetting symbol, and

wherein counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol further includes decrementing the count value with each occurrence of the at least one offsetting symbol.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 further including: determining a payout, and

wherein determining a bonus payout comprises determining a multiplier to be applied to the payout.

63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein determining a bonus payout includes determining points for a slot play reward system.

64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63 further including determining a payout for expired occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol.

65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50 wherein generating an outcome is performed by a gaming device.

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65 wherein the gaming device includes a reel slot machine and the symbols include reel symbols.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 66 wherein the reel slot machine includes a symbol display window and a payout line visible within the symbol display window; and

wherein counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol includes selecting at least one tracked symbol from among all symbols displayed in the symbol display window.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 66 wherein counting occurrences of at least one tracked symbol includes selecting the at least one tracked symbol from among symbols on a specified reel of the reel slot machine.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65 wherein the gaming device includes video poker machine and the symbols include playing card attributes.

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69 wherein the at least one tracked symbol comprises a function of the face value of cards dealt in a hand.

71. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

identifying at least one tracked symbol;

associating an expiration condition with each occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol wherein each occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires after its associated expiration condition has been satisfied, such that a first occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol may expire at a first time while a second occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol may expire at a second time that is different from the first time; ~~and~~

determining a number of qualifying occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol;

determining whether the number is at least a minimum number; and

providing, if the number is at least the minimum number, a bonus payout based upon a count value the number of qualifying occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol, wherein the ~~count value~~ number equals the number of occurrences of the tracked symbol during play less the number of expired tracked symbols.

72. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

identifying at least one tracked symbol having an associated expiration condition wherein an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires upon the associated expiration condition becoming satisfied;

identifying a bonus value;

determining a count value wherein the count value is incremented when there is an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol and the count value is decremented when an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires, such that the count value may be a non-zero integer after the count value is decremented upon an expiration of an occurrence; and

providing a bonus payout when the count value exceeds the bonus value.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 72 wherein determining a count value further includes:

initializing the count value upon initiation of a session of play by a player;
and

terminating the determining of the count value upon termination of the session of play by the player.

74. (Currently Amended) A gaming device comprising:

- a processor;
- a memory coupled to the processor storing a program to control the operation of the processor;
- the processor operative with the program to:
 - generate an outcome represented by a plurality of symbols;
 - count occurrences of at least one tracked symbol, thereby determining a number of occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol; and
 - determine whether the number is at least a minimum number; and
 - provide, if the number is at least a minimum number, a bonus payout based on a number of occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol counted in accordance with an expiration condition,
- wherein the expiration condition defines at least one of
 - (i) a number of plays, from a play in which an occurrence occurs, after which the occurrence expires and
 - (ii) a period of time, from a time at which an occurrence occurs, after which the occurrence expires, and further
- wherein the expiration condition is associated with each respective occurrence, such that a first occurrence may expire at a first time and a second occurrence may expire at a second time that is different from the first time.

75. (Previously Presented) The gaming device of claim 74 wherein the processor counts occurrences of the at least one tracked symbol by incrementing a count value by an integer value.

76. (Previously Presented) The gaming device of claim 74 wherein the expiration condition represents a number of plays after which an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires and the processor is further operative with the program to determine an expiration of an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol based on the expiration condition.

77. (Previously Presented) The gaming device of claim 74 wherein the expiration condition represents a time after which an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol expires and the processor is further operative with the program to determine an expiration of an occurrence of the at least one tracked symbol based on the expiration condition.